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LEGISLATIVE DIGEST
HOUSE REPUBLICAN CONFERENCE
CHAIRMAN ADAM PUTNAM WASHINGTON D.C. 226-2302

April 17, 2007

H.R. 786 - To amend the Reclamation Wastewater and Groundwater Study and Facilities Act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to participate in the Los Angeles County Water Supply Augmentation Demonstration Project, and for other purposes

Floor Situation
H.R. 786 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Linda Sanchez (D-CA) on January 31, 2007. The bill was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources.

H.R. 786 is expected to be considered on the floor on April 17, 2007.

**Note: During the 109th Congress, an identical bill (H.R. 4545) was introduced by Rep. Linda Sanchez. The bill was agreed to by the House of Representatives by voice vote on September 28, 2006. The Senate received the bill, but no action was taken.*

Summary
H.R. 786 amends the Reclamation Wastewater and Groundwater Study and Facilities Act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior ("the Secretary") to participate in the Los Angeles County Water Supply Augmentation Demonstration Project.

Specifically, the bill allows the Secretary, in cooperation with the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council, to participate in the planning, design, construction, and assessment of a neighborhood demonstration project. The neighborhood demonstration project will display the potential to recharge groundwater by retrofitting one or more site in the Los Angeles area with features designed to reflect state-of-the-art best management practices for water conservation, pollution reduction and treatment, and habitat restoration.

The neighborhood demonstration project will assess the potential new water supply yield based on the results of increased infiltration, as well as to determine the value of the new water.

The Federal share of the cost of the project cannot exceed 25% of the total cost of the project.

Background
As water demands grow due to competing pressures, municipal water providers must find new sources of water. Water reuse, recycling, and desalination are potential options which can relieve pressure on streams and aquifers that provide water for municipal and industrial use. Congress has used the authority under Title XVI (P.L. 102-575) to allow the Secretary of the Interior to identify and participate in projects for recycling municipal, industrial, domestic, and agricultural wastewater, as well as for desalination of seawater and brackish groundwater. To date, there have been over thirty projects authorized by Congress under the Title XVI program.

Southern California faces increasing uncertainty with respect to water supply availability and maintaining water quality. As the population in Los Angeles County is expected to grow by two million people by 2020, the demand for fresh water will also continue to grow. As the traditional imported water sources from state and federal projects becomes scarcer, Los Angeles is assessing other potential water supply measures, including urban storm water infiltration to meet its water needs. As urbanization has increased the area of paved surfaces over the past several decades, urban runoff has increased tenfold. With nearly 2 million acre-feet of unused storage capacity in local groundwater basins, capturing more runoff for infiltration could substantially increase local water supplies without the need for new surface storage facilities.

But concerns still remain that infiltrating storm water merely transfers pollution problems from the surface to the groundwater. While the soil layer does provide natural treatment, more study is needed to determine what conditions are most and least favorable for pollutant removal. This study looks to address the potential benefits and impacts of infiltration on groundwater quality, and assesses appropriate geographic, geologic and hydrologic conditions for infiltration. Additionally, the project will determine whether the groundwater recharge will provide sufficient water supply to offset the cost of implementation and extraction, compared with the cost of developing alternative water supplies.

Cost
This bill has not been scored by the Congressional Budget Office.

Staff Contact
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